

History and Developments of Wasatch

A Brief Outline Of The Principal Events Of The County From Its First Settlement

Editor's Note: The following interesting account of the early history of Wasatch county was taken from the old files of the Wave, dating back to December 1908.

From the best information obtainable, we are lead to the conclusion that Wasatch County is the very first portion of the State of Utah ever visited by white men, unless it should be a small portion of the southeast corner of the state on the east side of the Colorado river.

While our forefathers were struggling for independence along the Atlantic coast, the Spaniards were busy exploring the interior of the country south and west of the Rocky mountains. At that time this vast region, comprising Utah, Nevada, part of Idaho, Wyoming and Colorado was a wild and desolate country unexplored by white men and uninhabited, except for a few savage tribes of Indians who roamed from place to place living principally on roots and seeds. The country was claimed by Spain as a

part of its possessions the conquest of Mexico, by Hernando Cortez.

Numerous expeditions were sent out from Santa Fe from 1770 to 1780 to explore the northwest, but none of them, until the year 1776, seemed able to get beyond the Colorado river on account of the deep impassable canyon through which it flowed, all returning but little wiser than when they started.

The main object seemed to be to find a nearer and more practicable route to the Pacific coast, along which there were several Spanish settlements.

On the 20th of July, 1776, two Franciscan friars, Francisco Arriaga and Dominguez, and Silvestre Valdez Eschamela, in company with several others, set out from Santa Fe on the purpose of discovering a direct route to Monterey, California. Their course, at first, was northwest, but soon they turned north into what is now the State of Colorado, doubtless to avoid the deep canyon of the Colorado which had been so many times reported impossible to cross. On the 28th of August, their course turned northeast, on account of the impassable barriers to the west and north. September third they were again able to pursue their northwesterly course and two days later crossed and camped on the northwest bank of what is now known as Grande river in Colorado. On the ninth

they crossed White river near the Utah line, and on the 13th reached Green river, which they called Rio de San Buenaventura, the boundary line between the Utes and Comanches. The place where they first came to Green river they named Santa Cruz. Here were six large black poplars on which they left an inscription. They followed down Green river in a southwesterly course for about ten leagues and from the top of a hill could see the junction of the White and Green rivers. They could also see a river flowing into Green river from the west which is undoubtedly the Uintah or Duchesne as it is usually called. They crossed the river at this point and traveled up the stream flowing from the west for some distance and camped on the night of September 17th at a branch of the river which they called San Cosme (very probably the north branch, now known as the Uintah).

the range and what they saw convinced them that the rumors were not mere exaggerations, but that a desirable agricultural valley did exist here and when they returned to Provo, they reported what they had seen.

Many were anxious to make further explorations and the next spring, Wm. Wall, George W. Bean, Aaron Daniels, and other stockmen of the lower valley drove a herd of stock through the canyon and built some ranches at the lower end of this valley and put up considerable hay with a view to keeping their stock through the winter. During the spring and summer, a number of other parties came into the valley, explored it, and concluded it was a good place to locate, in other words, they looked upon the beautiful handiwork of nature "and saw that it was good".

In July of this year, a party of Provokes, with county surveyor J. C. Snow, came up and laid out about a section of ground north of the present site of Heber City into twenty-acre tracts, each man of the party selecting his twenty-acre farm. They began at once considering the feasibility of building a road through Provo Canyon. The matter was laid before Brigham Young, the chief mover in nearly all the undertakings in the territory at that time, and his advice was asked. He was told of the prospects awaiting the settlers in

prospect awaiting the settlers in Provo valley, the hardships they would have to endure on account of the cold climate and high altitude, and in short, as well as they were able, the advantages and disadvantages of a settlement here. President Young, with a view to settling up this valley and giving access to and from it and probably also with a view to establishing a route through to the east, which would be of easier grade and, for the southern counties at least, nearer than by way of either emigration or Parley's canyon, seemed to favor the project.

Whatever motive may have prompted the move, he advised the making of a road at once and the company was immediately organized and the work of constructing a road through Parley's canyon commenced, and before winter set in a fairly passable road was built connecting Provo and this valley.

Two thousand shares of fifty dollars each and the opening of the company books for subscription on or before the first day of March, 1867. The object of the company is declared to be "the construction of a road through Provo canyon not less than twenty feet wide, from Utah valley, Utah county, to Provo valley, Wasatch county, and when said road is constructed and accepted by the selectmen of Wasatch and Utah counties, said counties are hereby authorized to collect toll thereon as provided in Section 6 of this act.

"In case the said road or the bridges thereon are suffered to get out of repair, a majority of the selectmen of the counties of Utah and Wasatch may order the gate to be thrown open and the collection of toll stopped until the necessary repairs are made."

The toll authorized is as follows: For every cartage or vehicle drawn by two animals, \$1.00; for every additional pair of animals, 50 cents; for each horse or mule led, rode, or packed, 50 cents; for sheep, goats, and hogs, each 5 cents; for every loose animal of the horses or cattle kind, 15 cents.

The charter expires after the term of twenty years and the road shall then "become the property of the commonwealth in good condition as shall be accepted by the selectmen of Utah and Wasatch Counties."

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